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Why Political Ethics now?

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The results of Japan's Lower House election at the end of last October was disappointing, almost keeping things as they were. Despite NPO and youth climate actions, neither climate crisis nor nuclear power generation became a significant election campaign issue. Opposition parties are too weak, the ruling coalition (LDP-Komeito) seems to stay on.

Before the election, we, JAES 21, sent a questionnaire "Political morality for politicians in the days of climate crisis" to prospective candidates of the election. We started this questionnaire project because we have a vital concern about the deterioration of ethics among politicians. With an ethical code of conduct in mind, politicians must be fully prepared to tackle ongoing serious climate crises from a long-term and science-based perspective.

Of course, citizens should also be ethically prepared to cope with intensifying climate crises. As globally reported, unusual weather in various parts of the world causes heavy rainfalls/resulting floods in some countries and extreme dryness/resulting wildfires in others. Some islanders have to move due to sea-level rises. Strange weather events directly hit people's lives and social/economic activities all over the world. If we leave things as they are, humans will come closer to the global apocalypse.

Terrified with the image of catastrophe, we tend to focus on "actions" these days rather than discussing "ethics." Young people globally link together, urging adults in demonstrations to take actions against climate crises. Their appeal of taking immediate action attracts media attention, and global leaders, too, referred to "immediate action" at COP26.

However, climate crises require a long-term strategy and preparedness backed by a sound ethical and scientific base. Lack of strategy will lead us to failure in facing the possible radical transformation of society. Unfortunately, civic education has been neglected in Japan. As a result, Japanese people are not accustomed to (or do not prefer to) open discussion on such substantial issues as philosophy,

religion, ethics, and politics. But we cannot change society without a core thought/belief. Today's young people are not interested in politics, not because they are not well approached, but because they do not have a deep thought or philosophy. We, the old generation, should be partly blamed for not having developed a habit of deep thinking during the post-WWII decades.

The Glasgow Climate Pact adopted at the COP26 represents a critical step toward global decarbonization. Backed by the IPCC Working Group I contribution to its Sixth Assessment Report and the UNEP's warning in its Emission Gap Report 2021, the Parties were able to agree on the effort to "Keep 1.5 C Alive", "aiming to turn the 2020s into a decade of climate action and support."

Now, the negative impacts of human-induced climate change have become clear. As scientists are warning, humans are "running out of time to limit global warming to 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels", and again the year 2022 will be "a fraught year for the planet."